

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Please cancel claims 1-3 without prejudice or disclaimer.

4. (New) A knitted fabric joining method using a flat knitting machine comprising at least a pair of front and back needle beds, which extend in a longitudinal direction and are located in opposed positions in a cross direction and at least either of which is capable of being racked in the longitudinal direction, wherein at least two tubular knitted fabrics, each comprising a front knitted fabric part and a back knitted fabric part, are knitted in succession in a direction of course and overlapped with each other at their joining region at which gores of different sizes between the front knitted fabric part and the back knitted fabric part are formed, thereby being joined together, said method comprising steps of:

holding in joining regions of the front and back knitted fabric parts, which are held on the opposed needle beds, loops in the joining region of a small gore and loops in the joining region of a large gore in a manner that the loops of both ends of the joining region of a first one of the small or large gore are held substantially opposite to the loops of both ends of the joining region of a second one of the small or large gore, wherein both joining regions contain needles in equal number, with at least an empty needle being contained in at least one of the joining regions;

forming a gore at joining portions of the tubular fabrics by joining together loops of one tubular knitted fabric which are situated in the joining region and located at a lateral end thereof and loops of another tubular knitted fabric which are situated in the joining region and located at a lateral end thereof starting from a loop located adjacent to a boundary between the front knitted fabric part and the back knitted fabric part,

such that the loops being joined are overlapped with each other in such a manner that the loops located at a same position with respect to the boundary are overlapped with each other and then are subjected to a bind-off process; and

knitting a single tubular knitted fabric.

5. (New) The knitted fabric joining method according to Claim 4, wherein said method being used to join a first knitted fabric and a second knitted fabric, said method further comprising the following steps to be performed before the start of the joining of the first and second knitted fabrics:

(1) transferring the loops in the joining region of the front knitted fabric part or the back knitted fabric part of the first knitted fabric to an opposed needle bed;

(2) racking the front needle bed or the back needle bed rightward or leftward, and then rotating the second knitted fabric, and transferring back the loops of the joining region of the first knitted fabric as transferred in step (1) to the opposed needle bed sequentially starting from the loop located at the end of the joining region of the first knitted fabric far from the second knitted fabric, while transferring the rest of the loops of the front or back knitted fabric part having the loops transferred in step (1) to the

opposed needle bed starting from a loop located at the end of the first knitted fabric far from the second knitted fabric so that, in the first knitted fabric, the loops of both ends of the joining region of a first gore of the front or back knitted fabric part are held substantially opposite to the loops of both ends of the joining region of a second gore of the other knitted fabric part, wherein both joining regions contain needles in equal number, with at least an empty needle being contained in at least one of the joining regions,

(3) transferring the loops in the joining region of the front knitted fabric part or the back knitted fabric part of the second knitted fabric, which corresponds in size to the joining region in which the loops were transferred in step (1), to an opposed needle bed, and

(4) racking the front needle bed or the back needle bed in a direction opposite to the direction of the needle bed being racked in step (2), and then rotating the first knitted fabric, and transferring back the loops in the joining region of the second knitted fabric as transferred in step (3) to the opposed needle bed sequentially starting from the loop located at the end of the joining region of the second knitted fabric far from the first knitted fabric, while transferring the rest of the loops of the front or back knitted fabric part having the loops transferred in step (3) to the opposed needle bed starting from a loop located at the end of the second knitted fabric far from the first knitted fabric so that, in the second knitted fabric, the loops of both ends of the joining region of a first gore of the front or back knitted fabric part are held substantially opposite to the loops of both ends of the joining region of a second gore of the other knitted fabric part, wherein

both joining regions contain needles in equal number, with at least an empty needle being contained in at least one of the joining regions.

6. (New) The knitted fabric joining method according to Claim 4, wherein said method is used to join a second knitted fabric and a third knitted fabric to a first knitted fabric after knitting the first, second and third knitted fabrics wherein the first knitted fabric is sandwiched between the second and third knitted fabrics, said method further comprising the following steps to be performed before the start of joining of the first, second, and third knitted fabrics:

(1) transferring the loops in the joining region of the front knitted fabric part or the back knitted fabric part of the first knitted fabric to be joined to the second knitted fabric to an opposed needle bed, while transferring the loops in the joining region of the third knitted fabric having a gore, which corresponds in size to the joining region of the first knitted fabric in which the loops were transferred, to the opposed needle bed,

(2) racking the front needle bed or the back needle bed rightward or leftward, and then rotating the second knitted fabric, and transferring back the loops in the joining region of the first and third knitted fabrics as transferred in step (1) to the opposed needle bed sequentially starting from the loop located at the end of the joining region of the first and third knitted fabrics far from the second knitted fabric, while transferring the rest of the loops of the front or back knitted fabric part having the loops transferred in step (1) to the opposed needle bed starting from a loop located at the end of the first and third knitted fabrics respectively far from the second knitted fabric so that, in the first

and third knitted fabrics, the loops of both ends of the joining region of a first gore of the front or back knitted fabric part are held substantially opposite to the loops of both ends of the joining region of a second gore of the other knitted fabric part wherein both the joining regions contain needles in equal number, with at least an empty needle being contained in at least one of the joining regions,

(3) transferring the loops in the joining region of the first knitted fabric to be joined to the third knitted fabric, which corresponds in size to the joining region in which the loops were transferred in step (1), to an opposed needle bed, while transferring the loops in the joining region of the second knitted fabric, which corresponds in size to the joining region of the first knitted fabric in which the loops were transferred in step (1), to the opposed needle bed, and

(4) racking the front needle bed or the back needle bed in a direction opposite to the direction of the needle bed being racked in step (2), and then rotating the third knitted fabric, and transferring back the loops in the joining region of the first and second knitted fabrics as transferred in step (3) to the opposed needle bed sequentially starting from the loop located at the end of the joining region of the first and second knitted fabrics far from the third knitted fabric, while transferring the rest of the loops of the front or back knitted fabric part of the first and second knitted fabrics having the loops transferred in step (3) to the opposed needle bed starting from a loop located at the end of the first and second knitted fabrics respectively far from the third knitted fabric so that, in the first and second knitted fabrics, the loops of both ends of the joining region of a first gore of the front or back knitted fabric part are held substantially

opposite to the loops of both ends of the joining region of a second gore of the other knitted fabric part, wherein both joining regions contain needles in equal number, with at least an empty needle being contained in at least one of the joining regions.